

4/5/80
THE ASSOCIATION OF THE BAR
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COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS

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June 5, 1980

The Honorable Edmund Muskie
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)

U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

☒ Release ☐ Excise ☐ Deny

Exemption(s): _____

Declassify: ☐ In Part ☐ In Full

☐ Classify as _____ ☐ Extend as _____ ☐ Downgrade to _____

Date _____ Declassify on _____ Reason _____

Just over a year ago, in April 1979, we visited Argentina on behalf of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York to inquire into alleged human rights violations. In our Report, a copy of which is enclosed, we confirmed that a consistent pattern of gross violations of human rights has undermined the rule of law in Argentina. We are writing at this time to express our concern about recent reports indicating that the Administration is contemplating a shift in policy toward Argentina.

According to the Washington Post of May 29, 1980, this change is being considered in part because of Argentina's new "Soviet connection." Although Argentina did negotiate grain sales with the Soviet Union earlier this year, we find it difficult to believe that the military group in control is genuinely likely to become a Soviet ally. Even if that possibility is less remote than we believe it to be, we urge that Argentina not be allowed to circumvent its human rights obligations through political gestures.

During the past several years, Argentina has been a key focus of the Administration's human rights policy. We believe that this attention has brought improvements in that country. However, the human rights situation today is still grave, and the ruling group continues to deny accountability for the actions of its security forces. Less than two months ago, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the O.A.S. published a Report of its recent Mission to Argentina, in which it found that

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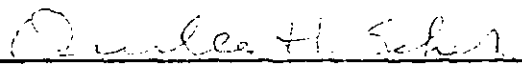
...the decision to form the command units that were involved in the disappearance and possible extermination of...thousands of persons was adopted at the highest level of the Armed Forces for the purpose of decentralizing the antisubversion campaign. As a result, each of the command units had unlimited power to eliminate terrorists or those suspected of being terrorists.

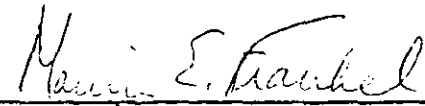
The Commission is morally convinced that, in general, these authorities could not have been ignorant of the events as they were occurring and did not adopt the necessary measures to terminate them. (p. 129)

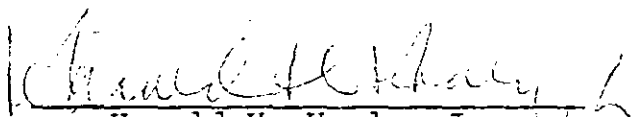
While such conditions continue, any change in U.S. focus would be a regrettable departure from an enlightened human rights policy. It would seriously undermine efforts under way at the O.A.S., the U.N., and within Argentina to improve the situation.


Because of our direct concern with the conditions in Argentina, we earnestly hope that it may be possible to meet with you or Deputy Secretary Warren Christopher personally, to discuss and clarify these issues. We respectfully request such a meeting at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely yours,


Orville H. Schell, Jr.


Marvin E. Frankel


Harold H. Healy, Jr.


Stephen L. Kass


R. Scott Greathead

Enc.

cc: Warren Christopher
William Bowdler
Patricia Derian
David Newsom
Zbigniew Brzezinski
Lincoln Bloomfield
W. Graham Claytor, Jr.
dh Luther H. Hodges, Jr.